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FED WORKER KEPT JOB AFTER THREAT TO SELL NUKES TO PLO

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WASHINGTON — A Dept. of Energy technician who threatened to sell nuclear materials to the Palestine Liberation Organization was allowed to keep his sensitive job for five years after his plot was uncovered, the General Accounting Office revealed yesterday.

The technician — whose identity is protected by the Privacy Act — first came to the agency's attention in 1982

but a bureaucrat lost his file and forgot about the allegations.

The technician therefore kept his job and his access to nuclear materials and documents until he was arrested in 1985 on charges of carrying a weapon.

The technician — who also has been accused of rape, robbery, arson, and drug dealing — has now lost his clearance to handle sensitive material but still works for the Energy Dept.

The Energy Dept. makes nuclear weapons for defense programs.

The technician was cited as an example in a GAO report about security procedures at the Energy Dept., which was prepared at the request of Rep. Mike Synar (D-Okla.).

Synar called the report "scary" and said it is "amazing" that "a major espionage case, a major security breach, has

not already happened at the Dept. of Energy. We're talking about the very heart of our national security."

The report said numerous Energy Dept. employees are known to have drug habits — which enemy agents could use to blackmail them.

The security lapse at the Energy Dept. was revealed in the same month in which it was learned that laxity at the State Dept. has hopelessly compromised security at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

Energy Dept. spokesmen say the FBI determined in 1981 that the threat to sell to the PLO was "part of a scam to make money" and that no nuclear materials were ever transferred or meant to be transferred.

"He was one of the players in a scam. He did not intend to sell uranium to the PLO," the spokesman said.

The spokesman said the FBI referred the charges to the U.S. attorney, who checked them out and declined to prosecute in 1982.

However, an aide to Synar said the FBI also referred the matter to the Energy Dept., which lost the information.